

## *I Love You Wollie* an experience of hospital clown Jackie Garner

..... as told to Shobi by Jackie Garner a.k.a. Lollibells of Durham, North Carolina

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I was packing to go to a convention when I got a call from a hospital I'd never been to. I don't know how they found out about Lolli. They said "We have a little boy in ICU could you come as fast as you can." I had already packed my costume, but when I heard ICU, I had Lolli clowned up and at that hospital in 30 minutes. I had never and never since put on my makeup that fast. I could never makeup again that fast or that well except that it was something that I was called to do.

I get up to Pediatric ICU and as soon as the elevator doors open you can hear crying and moaning cause these kids don't like being there and they're hurting. Now ICU is normally glassed rooms, because they have to be able to see everything. You can see all the children in their beds. You haven't been called to see them, but all those children are watching you. So I go into a little boy's room - his name was Vincent. He is four and a half years old. And again you could hear moaning. I come around the corner and again in character voice "Hello" The doctor says, "You must be Lolli!" "Yes, and who is this handsome boy" The doctor introduces "This is Vincent." Lolli continues "Are you married? Are you engaged to anyone?" He doesn't say anything, he is just looking at me, but his eyes are smiling. He's not scared of me after all he's four and one-half.

The doctor says "Lolli, do you mind if we bring in a rocking chair - would you like to sit in a rocking chair and hold Vincent?" Lolli answered "Sure would" So, they brought in this beautiful white rocking chair. And again I can be seen by all the other children all around me from their beds. They lay a pad across my lap and they lay Vincent in my arms, and he is so close. His eyes immediately go to my jeweled heart nose. He's checking out my hair, my face and all the bright colors. And Mama is looking right over my left shoulder and Daddy's looking right over my right shoulder, so we are all close. "Lolli loves you, Vincent."

I can tell he wants to touch my nose. So I take his finger and push my nose and laugh. "This is little Lolli's laugh button. Tee hee, Little Lolli loves you, Vincent." Mama's over the left shoulder saying "I love you, baby" and Daddy says "It's O.K. son, Daddy's here."



### *Something Magical Happens When a Clown Is There with a Child in a One-on-one*

About 30 minutes goes by - just quiet time of giggles and nose pushing. In that time I knew this child like my own. We made a connection that no one could ever separate. Yet, he had not said one word to me. All of a sudden, Vincent pushes my nose again and he giggles all the way to his toes. Just giggles. Not one tear. There was no pain. This is what happens, something magical happens when a clown is there with a child in a one-on-one.

He just had the sweetest smile in his eyes and face. And each time I would say "Little Lolli loves you, Vincent," and Mama and Daddy would say "I'm here, I love you." This time I pushed my nose and giggled and said "I love you." He took a breath and spoke, "I love you, Wollie." I wanted to change my name to Wollie, right there. Then he said "I love you, Mommy. I love you, Daddy." And

with this, his eyes went up to my eyes and my nose. "You want to push my nose again." So I took his little finger and pushed my nose. As I said "Little Lolli loves you, Vincent," he takes in the deepest breath, his smile broadens and his eyes are glistening. Then he breathes out his last breath. He dies in Lolli's arms.

### *The True Tears of a Clown*

The doctor comes over and takes Vincent from my arms and the mother and father go with him and I'm thinking, I've got to get out of here. I've got to run. But I look up at all those kids around me. They don't know what just happened. They are watching my every move. I am the clown. I am not Jackie Garner dressed as Lollibelle - I am Lolli to them. I am the only clown they may ever see. So I wave "Hello" in Lolli's character voice, but I'm thinking I've got to get out of here. I go out the door and there is a child right there. "Hello, Lolli loves you." I'm thinking, if I can just get to the elevator, I can let this out. I'm half way down the hall and I can see the elevator button. "Hello, Hi" waving to the other children. Inside me, the mother I am, is screaming, but these kids don't see this. It does not show on my face, because I am Little Lolli the clown.

Jackie Garner cannot do this. God has a part in this, something greater has control of this for you when you do this with all your heart and you want to help the kids. He's going to help you do it. That's the only way you are going to get through it. I'm not a great person. I'm not superwoman. I just have to let go and let Him help me handle it.

So, I'm almost to the elevator, and here come Vincent's Dad. "Clown, wait!" Tears are running down his face and he is reaching into his pocket. "What do I owe you?" I answer softly "Nothing, what do I owe you!" And I leaned over and whispered into his ear. "There are children watching and I have to stay in clown character."

And as I go to the elevator I wave. "I love you, Daddy. Bye! Bye!" I push the button and I see the down light flashing, but here comes the mother crying. "Lolli, please I need to see you." I answer in character "O.K. Mom." And I think that was the longest walk I ever made in my life - back down the hall toward the mother. When I get there, Mom just falls into my arms - and she is sobbing into my costume - and I can feel her tears go past my hair and down my neck. "Lolli, he never got to go to Disney World, my baby never even got to see the circus and all of that. Oh, did you notice the way he went, there was no pain. He was smiling, he was giggling." And Lolli whispered in her ear, "I know, Mom. He's going to be fine. You're going to see him someday and you're going to take up just were you left off. But other children are watching Lolli. I love you and from one mommy to another I do understand. Thank you for letting me be a part of this." She looked up, "We will never forget you, Lolli." Daddy comes out and they walk back down the hall. And there I am trying to get back to the elevator, again, in character waving to the children "Hello, Hi, Little Lolli loves you." The children for all they knew, the child fell asleep in my arms.

The elevator door opens and sure enough there was a mom inside with two kids. "Hello!" I'm thinking, soon I'll be outside and I can let go. And the lobby was full of kids, and the parking lot looked like Disney World. "Hello! How ya doing?" I get on the freeway and everyone is driving by waving at the clown - "Oh look there is a clown. Hello, Clown" I'm thinking, God find me a dirt road please! And I found one right after I asked for it. I drove down that road and there wasn't a soul on the road and I was able to let go and cry.

These to me are the true tears of a clown. When you are touched by something and you realize that you are being used to touch and offer healing. Be it death or whatever, you never know what you are going to be asked to do.